University of Virginia Center for Politics

Talking Turkey: Immigration

General Facts

- Immigration in the United States is governed by three government agencies under the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Customs and Border Protection. These agencies adapt to changes in Immigration law and carry out Executive Orders, like President Obama's in 2014 and President Trump's in 2017 .

- In the US today there about 44,000,000 foreign-born residents. About a quarter of these are from Mexico, representing the largest plurality. Other countries from whom many foreign-born residents come include China, Philippines, India, El Salvador, and Vietnam. These foreign-born residents mostly reside in metropolitan areas. (Source: 2010 Census)

- Most Economists agree that immigration of high-skilled workers is overwhelmingly good for the economy, and further that immigration of low-skilled workers is still beneficial to the average native born American. There is no significant statistical evidence to support claims that immigration harms domestic workers. Despite this, there remains debate among politicians about the effects of immigration on the welfare of domestic workers. (Source: Chicago Initiative on Global Markets)

- In recent years illegal immigration been at the forefront of the political discussion of immigration. President Reagan signed a 1986 bill making it illegal to hire undocumented immigrants, who made up around five percent of the workforce at the time. Despite the new law, illegal immigration remained a problem. Since 2001 there have been many attempts at comprehensive immigration reform, but none of the bills reached the President's desk, despite bi-partisan attempts in 2006 and 2013. In November, 2014 President Obama, citing inaction by Congress, signed executive orders to address illegal immigration. Many states objected to this

action by the president and sued, and the action was ruled unconstitutional. In the 2016 presidential campaign Donald Trump made illegal immigration one of his main focuses, proposing increases in deportations and a large border wall.

- ○ Most economists believe that legalizing undocumented would be the most efficient solution to the problem of illegal immigration. US GDP (economic output) could increase between $180 billion and $1.4 trillion over a 10 year period according to studies (Cato Institute 2009 and Center for American Progress 2013, respectively). Those who favor amnesty use economic arguments supported by data like these. They also appeal to the supposed immorality of uprooting families and deporting them, often back to harsh circumstances. (Sources: Cato Institute, Center for American Progress)
- ○ Those against amnesty for undocumented immigrants appeal to the rule of law. They say that the law is there for a reason and we have to use it. Those who enter the United States illegally break immigration laws by definition of their entry and therefore must face the punishment.

- Crime is also an issue often discussed in relation to immigration. Despite there being no evidence that immigrants commit crimes at a higher rate than native born citizens, and actual evidence that immigrant population density is associated with lower crime rates, the perception that immigrants are sometimes dangerous persists in some political circles. Donald Trump appealed to these perceptions in some of his campaign rhetoric throughout the 2016 campaign. (Source Econofact)

- The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is an American immigration policy that allows undocumented immigrants who entered the country as minors to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and to be eligible for a work permit. As of 2017, approximately 800,000 people have enrolled in the program created by DACA. The policy was established by the Obama administration in June 2012 and rescinded by the Trump administration in September 2017, with a six month delay to allow Congress to take action. (Source Pew Research)

Further Research

- In Depth
  - Council on Foreign Relations' Summary of Recent Immigration Debate: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-immigration-debate-0
  - Recent Immigration Statistics: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/03/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/
  - Citizenship, Green Cards, and Deportation: https://www.usa.gov/immigration-and-citizenship
  - US Citizenship and Immigration Services: https://www.uscis.gov/
  - US Citizenship and Immigration Services on DACA: https://www.uscis.gov/archive/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca

- Party Positions:

  - Democratic Party: https://www.democrats.org/issues/immigration-reform

  - Republican Party: https://gop.com/platform/reforming-government/

- Kid Friendly
  - Scholastic's Immigration stories: http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/index.htm

Talking Points with Your Child

- Talk about your family's heritage. Where did they immigrate from? Why? When? What were the conditions like in your country of origin at the time?
- Why would a family want to move to a different country?
- Are there any kids in your class from another country? Where are they from?
- Do you think we should have more immigration or less immigration? Why?
- When things are really bad in other countries, people leave as refugees, where should they go? Why?
- (For Older Kids) Should Congress pass a replacement for DACA? What should happen to undocumented immigrants who were brought here as children?